



United Nations  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

**23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee for the Review of the  
Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat  
Desertification (CRIC 23)**

**Panama City, Panama - 1<sup>st</sup> to 05<sup>th</sup> December 2025.**

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE AFRICAN GROUP**

**Thank you Mr. Chairperson for giving me the floor.**

**Mr. Chair of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention,**

**Madam Executive Secretary of the Convention,**

**Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the African Group, in place of its Chair, **Mr. KOUADIO Jean** of Côte d'Ivoire, who was unable to travel to Panama City, as were most of the Group's members.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Panama for their hospitality and warm welcome. However, it is regrettable that the majority of African delegates were unable to participate in this UN event due to a lack of visas.

My thanks also go to the Secretariat of the Convention for all the steps taken to facilitate the organisation of this 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the CRIC. Similarly, I reiterate our congratulations to the Executive Secretary and express the African group's unwavering and constant support for the success of her mission.

**Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the CRIC is being held at a time marked essentially by recurring and intensifying drought and land degradation, the fight against which is a priority in order to guarantee the well-being of populations.

In other words, accelerating the implementation of programmes to combat desertification and drought, as well as sustainable land management, is now an urgent necessity.

**Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,**

This Session of the CRIC leading up to COP 17 is of crucial interest for the African Group. Indeed, it offers an opportunity to pay closer attention to issues related to drought, land degradation neutrality, the future

strategic framework, means of implementation, land tenure, gender, the Science Policy Interface (SPI) and sand and dust storms.

With regard to drought, we welcome the progress that has been made. Nevertheless, our aspiration for a strong global regime on drought remains relevant.

With regard to land restoration, despite the enthusiasm of African countries, it must be noted that several challenges continue to slow down the achievement of land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030. In this regard, it would be necessary to restore an area of around 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land.

As for the future strategic framework, the African Group welcomes the ongoing efforts of the Intergovernmental Working Group set up to develop it. For its part, the African Group calls for a clear, ambitious and results-oriented strategic framework, while taking into account the priorities and specificities of all regions.

With regard to land tenure systems, the African Group requests stronger support from the UNCCD Secretariat and all partners in a position to do so to continue and strengthen their support for the development and implementation of land tenure strategies that guarantee access to land ownership, particularly for women and young people, in conjunction with land restoration programmes.

In the same vein, the African Group appreciates and supports the role of SPI in taking the scientific lead in the production of GLO products but recommends that Indigenous and Local Knowledge Systems (ILKS) be an integral part of the GLO3. The group also recommends the SPI take advantage of AI tools to broaden the scope on fast track assessments to include emerging issues that were put forward at COP16 on rangelands and grasslands in addition to the proposed sand and dust storms.

With regard to gender, the African Group thanks the Secretariat and its partners for their efforts to strengthen women's capacities and increase their representation in the Convention's decision-making processes. However, given the impact of land degradation and drought on vulnerable

groups, the African Group stresses the need to strengthen the economic and technical capacities of women and young people.

**Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,**

Achieving these objectives is closely linked to the mobilisation of the means of implementation. The African Group believes that the pace of mobilising financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building should go hand in hand with the emerging challenges and ambitions advocated.

In conclusion, while wishing CRIC 23 every success, the African regional group remains confident in the solidarity of the States Parties, but above all in their willingness to collaborate on points of convergence and to work tirelessly and in synergy to resolve points of divergence, in our shared quest for a better future for the planet and the people.

**Thank you very much, Mr. Chair./-**